Unit .20

Session .03

John Points to Jesus

Scripture

John 1:29-34; 3:25-36

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.' **31** I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. **33** I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' **34** I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." … **25** Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. **26** So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him." **27** John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' **29** He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease." **31** The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. **33** The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. **34** For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands. **36** The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

Option 1

Tell your students to imagine they can choose between one of three options. They could: 1) be perfect, never making a mistake or error; 2) have great charisma and get along with just about anybody, guaranteeing them great friendships their entire lives; or 3) immortality. Remember each student can only pick one!

Ask students to get into groups based on which one they chose. Tell them you're going to a small "debate": they are to imagine that someone is undecided between the three choices. Each group can compose a short speech (two minutes or less) explaining to this person why he or she should choose their option over the other two. Give them a few minutes to prepare their speeches and then to share them.

In today's lesson, John will point to Jesus in three specific capacities: His taking away sin as the Lamb (kind of like being perfect and never making a mistake); His prompting joy in His friends as the groom (like being a charismatic person with lots of friends); and His bringing eternal life as the Son (like having immortality). So with Jesus, we don't choose between the three options: He gives us all three, but even better!

Option 2

Ask your students to imagine they have volunteered to be the test subjects for the government's latest research project. Specifically, the government has invented a teleportation machine, but they haven't worked out all the kinks. They know that it will teleport someone somewhere else on planet Earth, but they don't know where; the subject could land at the North Pole, in the jungles of the Amazon, in a remote village in the Pacific Islands, or in the middle of Delhi.

Unfortunately, electronic devices don't work in the teleportation machine, so the subject will be responsible for making it back to the US or finding a way to contact the US. The government is giving you a choice between three "partners" who will accompany you on the teleportation trip. You may choose between taking along a lamb, your best friend, or a high-ranking US diplomat trained in politics and multiple languages. Whom, if anyone, do your students choose?

Let them think and then share their answers and why (presumably, for example, they might choose the lamb for food or for wool; they might choose their friend for company; they might choose the diplomat for her abilities; they might choose to go it alone).

In today's lesson, we'll learn about how John pointed to Jesus in three ways that correspond to your teleportation partner: Jesus is the Lamb who takes away our sin; He's the groom who brings us joy in His fellowship; He's the Son who has the power to give eternal life.

TEACHING PLAN

Read John 1:29-34.

The people John was preaching to were very familiar with the role that sheep played in the temporary atonement for their sin because the punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Each family unit was required to offer sacrifices to atone for their sin (Lev. 1–7). But each payment was temporary and the sacrifice had to be made over and over again (Heb. 10:3-4).

When John announced that Jesus is the Lamb of God, this language would have been both familiar and strange to the people. How could a man take the role of a sacrificial lamb? And how could He take away the sin of the world?

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, which was unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins.

- **How does the Old Testament sacrificial system help us understand the penalty of sin and the necessity of Jesus' death?**

Are you familiar with the phrase "phantom pains?" This is a term that is most used to describe an experience that many amputee patients have. Whatever limb was removed no longer has connection to their nervous system and can no longer be used by the body, yet even once the limb is gone, patients can still experience phantom pains, which means their body still experiences some of the same sensations it did when the body part was present. These removed parts can sometimes "feel" like they are still there. This concept helps us understand how sin impacts us, even after we have received new life in Christ.

Not only does the Lamb of God take away the penalty of our sin, but He also removes its power. Although we may experience "phantom pains" that manifest in temptations and sinful desires, the truth is that we have been made new and that our old identity no longer defines us and no longer has power over us. In Christ, God has given us the Holy Spirit and set us free from the power of sin and death (Rom. 8:1-4).

- **How would you describe to someone the power of sin versus the presence of sin?**

Read John 3:25-30.

At this point in the Gospel storyline, John the Baptist's vibrant ministry was beginning to wane, and Jesus' ministry was just getting started. During this period of transition from John the Baptist to Jesus, there could have been major disputes, a falling out, or some sort of conflict between Jesus and John. Instead, John the Baptist handled his declining popularity and Jesus' rise with the kind of humility and confidence that is characteristic of someone who knew his mission.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

John 1

29. Whereas the Old Testament sacrifices were temporary and incomplete, Jesus was the perfect Lamb of God who bore, in His death, the totality of the penalty of sin, offering a permanent solution to the punishment for and reality of sin (Heb. 10:1-4,11-14). As a result, we no longer have to offer regular sacrifices to atone for our sins. Jesus took care of it on our behalf. This gift of the gospel is one that we could never earn or deserve—and yet we have the privilege of receiving it.

Because Jesus was perfect and lived a perfect life as a human, never once sinning or falling to temptation, He is the only one qualified to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Because He did not deserve to die (since death only comes as a punishment for sin), Jesus' death was the only one that could take the place of the deaths of others.

John 3

25-30. John's disciples were confused. They didn't recognize who Jesus was, and therefore they didn't rightly understand their (or John's) place. They were concerned with John's popularity decreasing because they saw Jesus as competition. They were concerned that their influence would decrease as people flocked to Jesus instead of John. They didn't recognize who Jesus was. But John did.

John's response to his disciples indicates that he not only recognized that Jesus is the groom, but he also took great delight in the groom and was honored to be his forerunner. John wasn't struggling with feeling like he needed to defend his platform or his pride; he recognized who Jesus was and it led him to rejoice that he got to know Jesus and to play an important role in the incredible story that is redemption. John knew that he didn't have the power to bring ultimate joy and satisfaction, but he could point to the One who can.

As with the John the Baptist, the same holds true for us. When we recognize who Jesus is, it gives us clarity about our identity and our role in His story.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 72, DDG)

Christ as Sacrifice

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins.

TEACHING PLAN

Some of John's followers approached him with a problem on their minds. More and more people were going to see Jesus and His disciples to be baptized. Who was this man? Why were people going to Him and not John? Did Jesus' ministry mean that John's work was no longer effective? Perhaps John's disciples felt like Jesus' rising popularity was a threat to their own work. Whatever their motivations, they went to John with questions.

John the Baptist's response was seasoned with humility. He attributed the growth of Jesus' ministry to God and nothing else. John recognized that Jesus' ministry was always designed to replace his own. That's why John reminded his followers that he was not the Messiah and that the Messiah's work would be greater than his. The remarkable thing about John's response is how content he seemed to be with those developments. He could be humble and confident because he knew his role—to point people to the Messiah!

- **How does recognizing who Jesus is bring clarity to your own identity and purpose?**
- **When have you found yourself to be most delighted in making more of Christ and less of yourself?**

Read John 3:31-36.

When it comes to life in Christ, the Bible is clear, such as in passages like this one, that there are two options: eternal life or eternal judgment. You are either alive in Christ or dead in sin. You are either a slave to righteousness or a slave to sin. You are either in Christ or you are not in Christ. Jesus says plainly that He is the only way we can get to the Father (John 14:6). There is no middle ground. We either are on a path that leads to death or we get to receive eternal life, and that eternal life is one of complete abundance, one where we get to experience the Spirit without limits (3:34).

We do not serve a God who withholds from His children. When we are in Christ, we get all the blessings promised to the Son because we are in Him. God has given all things into Jesus' hands, and when we are in Christ, we get access to these things as well. We have to be careful not to think about abundant life on earthly terms. Following Christ doesn't exempt us from hardships in this life. The abundant life we receive through Christ is so much greater than anything the world could offer and it can't be measured through earthly standards. Life through Christ means we get God Himself—and that is the true source and prize of the abundant life.

- **In a culture that thinks all religions are equally valid, how do you feel about the gospel's clear distinction between those who are in Christ and those who are not?**

God is calling us to do work like John the Baptist. In God's hands, our brokenness can be used to humble us so we can be lights for His glory in the darkness of this world. The goal is to turn people's attention and affection toward Jesus as we make Him known. Nothing should bring more joy and satisfaction to our hearts than to see people know and embrace Jesus as their Savior. We must take on the humble posture of John the Baptist and see ourselves as a friend to the groom, pointing away from ourselves and to Jesus Christ.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

John 3

31-36. John the Baptist saw Jesus as superior, in where He came from and in what He taught. John's witness to Christ focused first on Jesus' origin. Jesus is the Messiah who comes from heaven, while John was a witness from the earth. The point here is that John the Baptist was under Jesus' authority because Jesus came from heaven.

This passage also shows that Jesus' teaching is superior to John the Baptist's. Everything Jesus taught was and is true. Everything Jesus said about Himself being the Messiah, the promised One, was and is true. The point here is that John was a witness to Jesus, while Jesus spoke the very words of God. Not only that, but Jesus also had the power to give the Spirit to those who believed and accepted His testimony.

Activity

Your students will create evangelism tools based on the lesson. Working alone or in groups, they may choose from the following options:

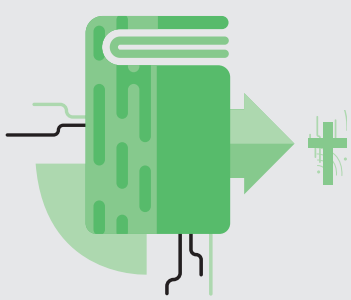
- A poster emphasizing one of Jesus' three roles (Lamb, Groom, Son)
- A tri-fold brochure or tract that can be handed out or used as a centerpiece for a table like at a restaurant; each fold should "advertise" Jesus in one of His roles (Lamb, Groom, Son)
- A thirty-second "commercial"/skit to be played on YouTube or TV "advertising" Jesus in one or all three of His roles

Give them some time to prepare their advertisements and then to show them. Debrief by asking about how these three roles display Jesus as beautiful and attractive. How can students actually witness to people this week using any or all of these three roles of Jesus, just like John did?

Alternative: Put students into groups of about three for a skit. In the skit, at least one person will be a non-believer. They should flesh out the non-believer's character as much as possible: family life, hobbies, interests, fears, etc. One other person in the skit should be John the Baptist, who has time-traveled to the present day. John should point the non-believer to Jesus using at least one of the three roles talked about in today's lesson; students should tailor John's words to the specifics of the non-believer. (The remaining members of the group can be friends to the non-believer or fellow Christians who try to help John, or both.) Give students time to prepare their skits and then to show them. Debrief by talking about how the roles John points out provide a good introduction to Jesus for non-believers

(p. 73, DDG) Christ Connection

John the Baptist said he wasn't the groom; he was the friend of the groom. As the friend, it was his responsibility to decrease in stature and take joy in the groom's wedding. Jesus is the groom from above who came to give His life for His bride—those who receive His Word and believe in Him.



LESSON 46: HUMILITY
JOHN POINTS TO JESUS
John 1:29–34; 3:25–36

JOHN POINTS TO JESUS
Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

JESUS CONNECTION
John said he was like the groom's friend at a wedding. His role as a friend was to step aside and take joy in the groom's wedding. Jesus was the groom. He came from Heaven to give His life for His bride—those who receive His Word and believe in Him.

LIFEWISE QUALITY
HUMILITY – Refusing to think of myself as more important than I am.

HEAD
John identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God." What significance did this term have for the Jewish people?

Some of John the Baptist's followers were worried that Jesus was gaining more followers than John. How did John respond to them?

HEART

Humility is always built on an accurate view of God and of ourselves. John knew that his purpose was to serve others by pointing them to Jesus, the promised Messiah, rather than himself. How does seeing God for who He really is help us remain humble? In what ways might God be calling you to humbly serve others?

Desiring praise and positive attention is normal and healthy for our self-worth. But if we focus too much on the opinions of others, we can become prideful and think too much of ourselves. How can seeing ourselves as God does help us keep a healthy balance? What is the difference between accepting praise with humility and accepting praise pridefully?

HANDS

Choose one option:

1. Pride is the opposite of humility, and it takes many forms. Look at the list below and choose one or two areas where you struggle the most with pride. For each area, write one or two ways that you can choose to respond more humbly and ask God to help you to respond in those ways.
    - Fault-finding
    - Harshness with others
    - Focusing on how we look to others on the outside
    - Defensiveness
    - Need for special attention
    - Overlooking others
    - Disrespect in approaching God

2. The more we focus on Jesus and His plan, the less we focus on ourselves. Identify one area in your life where you could humbly step aside and direct the attention of others to God or other people who deserve recognition. Write two specific ways you can do this in the next week.